Design Resource

Ikat Saree Weaving - Sambalpur, Orissah

Handloom saree

by
Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Rakshitha
NID, Bengaluru

Source:
https://dsource.in/resource/ikat-saree-weaving-sambalpur-orissa

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Introduction

Ikat weaving is a kind of weaving that is well known all over the world. It is famously known for its intricate weaving process. This style of weaving uses a resist dyeing process as similar to tie-dye. It is an elaborate dyeing process in which yarn is dyed randomly in a natural zigzag style that is made of cotton or silk fabrics. Hence the final product is a piece of textile that is bathed and shimmered in colourful designs. Ikat weaving is unique, as it either uses the warp or weft to weave a design pattern. Sometimes they are tie-dyed using both warp and weft. Thus they are called as "Double Ikat".

The unique characteristic of Ikat fabric is the blurriness of the designs. This blurriness is a result of the extremely difficult method followed while weaving, as the weaver lines up the dyed yarns exclusively so that the design patterns are attained in the most perfect manner on the completed textile. This blurriness can be reduced either by the skills of craftsperson or by using the finest yarns. As Ikats are most difficult to create with little blurriness, and complicated patterns using multiple colours therefore they are more expensive. Though the blurriness is the characteristic of Ikat, it is often prized by textile collectors.

Ikat is an Indonesian word that refers to a cord, thread or knot. The word Ikat is introduced into European language that is attributed to Rouffaer. Now Ikat is a general English word that is used to describe the process and the specific pattern of how and from where it has produced. Usually, in the Indonesian language, even the plural form of Ikat remains as Ikat itself whereas in English the plural form adds an alphabet 's' in common and considered as Ikats.

The unique pattern of Ikat is produced in various traditional textile centers all over the globe, from India to Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Japan, Africa, and Latin America. In Japan, it is also called as "kasuri". Bukhara and Samarkand were famous for silk Ikats since19th century while other countries have cultures with long histories of Ikat production. In double Ikats, as both yarns of warp and weft are tied and dyed before being woven into a single textile they are very rarely produced due to the requirement of intensive skilled labour. Such ikats are produced in Guatemala, Okinawa islands of Japan, the village of Tenganan in Indonesia, Villages of Puttapaka and Bhoodan Pochampally in India and it is also produced in Gujarat, India. The production and the patterns of Ikat vary widely from region to region. Generally, these Ikats are the symbolism of wealth, power, prestige and status.

It seems to have a link between the production of Ikat in India and South-East Asia. As the Gujarati merchants brought Patola (silk fabric) to Indonesian rulers and there the activity of Ikat production was taken over by the Dutch. Thus the patterns of the Patola Ikat are predominantly similar to the double Ikats produced in Bali of Indonesia. In Europe in Mallorca and in Spain Ikat floral patterns are used. Earlier using the technique of Ikat weaving shoulder cloth, turban cloth and lungi were produced. But today various products like bags, mats, sarees, bedsheets, dupattas, purses and files are made. When it comes to Odisha, it is mainly associated with Ikat saree production. Ikat patterns are dyes and bound into the threads before the cloth is weaved. This particular process differentiates it from the tie and dye process where the fabric is woven at the initial phase.

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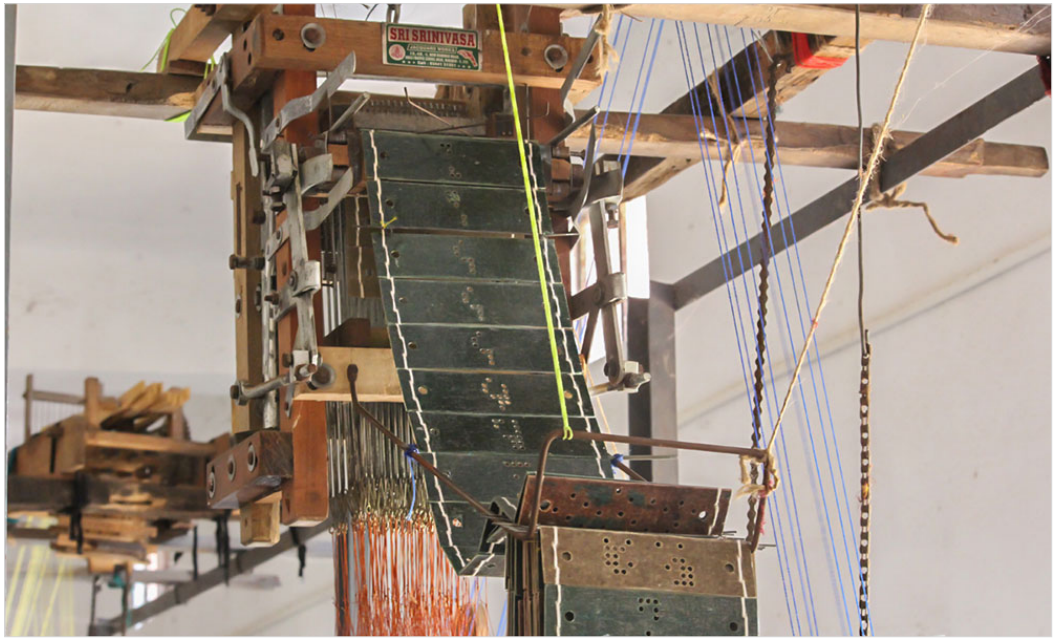
1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

The technique of Ikat seems to have its origins in different places of the world. Ikat is one of the most ancient techniques of dyeing fabrics. As per the sources, Odisha Ikat dates back to the 12th century. It is said that artisans of Gujarat who migrated to Odisha carried onward the craft. Ikats practised in Odisha showcase three varieties. They are:

• Single Ikat – The process in which the yarns of either warp or weft are dyed.
• Ikat – In this procedure both the yarns of weft and warp are used together but in different parts of the single fabric.
• Double Ikat – Here both the yarns of warp and weft are tied in a precise manner. Thus the threads from both axis form a mesh with each other at a certain point to showcase the complicated pattern of that particular fabric.

Odisha Ikat sarees have appealed to the tastes of celebrities like Aishwarya Rai Bachan to other world leaders. Though the maintenance of the Odisha silk Ikat sarees seems to be easy, they need to be handled with care by a gentle hand wash or dry cleaning and a moderate temperature level has to be maintained by ironing. For cotton Ikat sarees the machine wash can also be done, still, it is better preferred for dry cleaning. In the production of Odisha Ikat sarees, they are traditionally practised using hands. These days to meet the modern rising demand, the making of these Ikats has been modernized. Thus in some places, they are carried out in an automated manner using machines.



Cards placed in the jacquard to create designs on saree.

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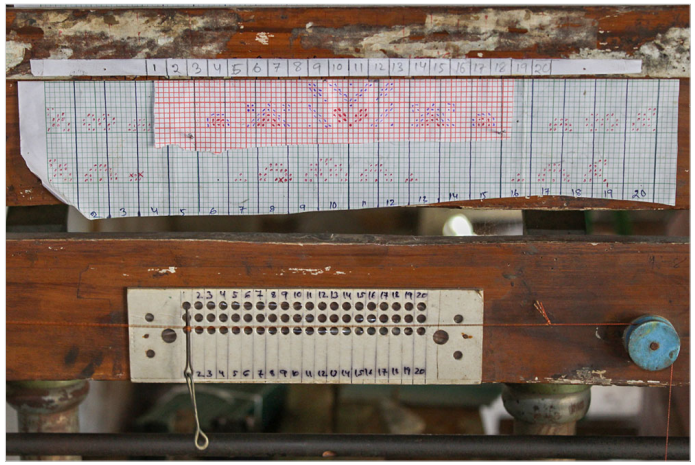
1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Mr. Sambad kumar Meher proprietor of Sushila hand-loom.

Skilled artisans involved in saree weaving process.

Senior artisan weaving a saree.



Reference of design patron which are punched on cards.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

The word Ikat refers to a dyeing process which is used to make designs on yarn.

Saree weaving work station in Sushila handloom.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Tools and Raw Materials

The tools and raw materials used for weaving the Ikat saree are as follows:

- **Raw Silk:** It is the main element to weave an Ikat saree.
- **Color:** Colors are used for the dyeing process.
- **Firewood:** It is used to heat up the dyeing container.
- **Water:** It is used for immersing the silk threads.
- **Water Tank:** It is used to store the water for colouring the silk threads.
- **Scissors:** It is used to cut off the excess silk threads.
- **Plastic Pirns:** These are used for winding the yarns.
- **Winding Machine:** It is used for winding the silk yarns.
- **Handloom:** It is used for weaving Ikat silk sarees.
- **Spinning Wheel:** The spinning wheel is used to wing the yarns to the pirns.
- **Bobbins:** The dyeing yarns are wound on these bobbins for warping.
- **Throw Shuttle:** It is used for inserting weft yarns while weaving.
- **Creels:** A stand like structure on which the fully wound bobbins of silk yarns are placed as per the pattern of warping.

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https://dsource.in/resource/ikat-saree-weaving-sambalpur-orissa/tools-and-raw-materials

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Flying shuttle is used to weft the fabric.

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Source:
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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Design patron is punched on cards using a punching machine.

The card used to make design patrons on it.

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Source:
https://dsource.in/resource/ikat-saree-weaving-sambalpur-orissa/tools-and-raw-materials

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

A small wood stick is used to wind yarn on it.

Sarees are weaved using handloom.

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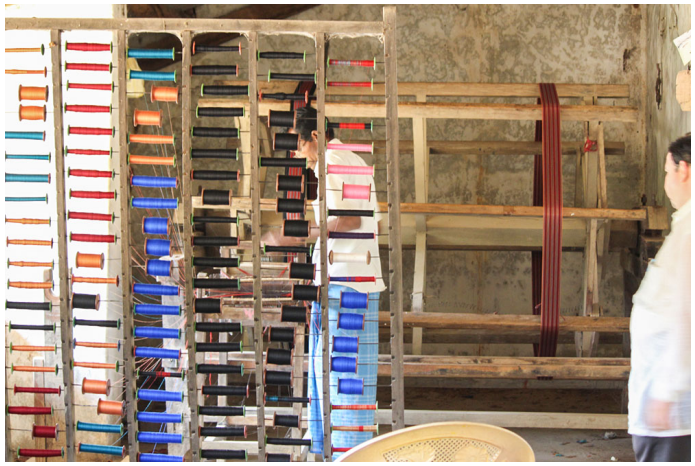
https://dsource.in/resource/ikat-saree-weaving-sambalpur-orissa/tools-and-raw-materials

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Winder is used to wind the yarn appropriately.



Different colours of yarn are winded on a warping wheel.

The manual spinning wheel is used to wind the yarn on a small wooden stick.

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https://dsource.in/resource/ikat-saree-weaving-sambalpur-orissa/making-process

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Making Process

Ikat saree weaving gets initiated by a dyeing technique that is used to pattern fabrics that use resist dyeing of the yarns prior to dyeing and weaving the cloth. Keeping the design in mind a proper chart of warp and weft is visualized on a graph paper for this particular style of weaving. Later as per the chart, the design is carefully transferred on weft and warp. In Ikat, the threads of warp and weft are measured carefully and the resist is formed by binding individual yarns or bundles of yarns with a firm wrapping applied in the preferred pattern. To keep the dyes from penetrating tightly bound bundles are covered with wax. These yarns are then dyed. If a new pattern is required to create then the bindings of the yarns may be altered at this stage and the yarns are dyed again with another preferred colour. This process (dye baths) may be repeated several times to get the flexibility to create textiles that produce complex multicoloured, multi-textured and multi-layered patterns. The pattern is visible to the weaver when the dyed threads are used as warp. These tie-dyed yarns are used either as warp yarns or as the weft yarns or sometimes even as both. Once the dyeing process is completed, it is dried and all the bindings are detached. These yarns are spun using the winding machine. Thus the required length of yarn is spun and cut off from the yarns that are on the winding machine. Those threads are woven into a fabric. This particular procedure is unique in Ikat as the resist is applied to the yarns prior and then they are woven into cloth. Since the surface design is created in the yarns rather than on the finished cloth.

These Ikat fabrics manufactured in Odisha are silk. They are woven by hand on a narrow loom in a labour-intensive process. Plain Ikat fabrics have different resist patterns thus it looks similar on both the sides of textile. There is no right and left sides to the cloth.

The easiest method to create Ikat is dyeing the warp than the weft. Before attaching the warp strings to the loom they are arranged in the bundle and they are individually tie-dyed so that the pattern is visible when the loom is set up. The tie-dyed warp threads are further loaded to the beam. This beam is placed in the loom and the yarns are knotted to the previous ones on the loom to begin the process of weaving. Thus by using the shuttle-pit loom or by using the fly-shuttle loom sarees are weaved in different patterns.

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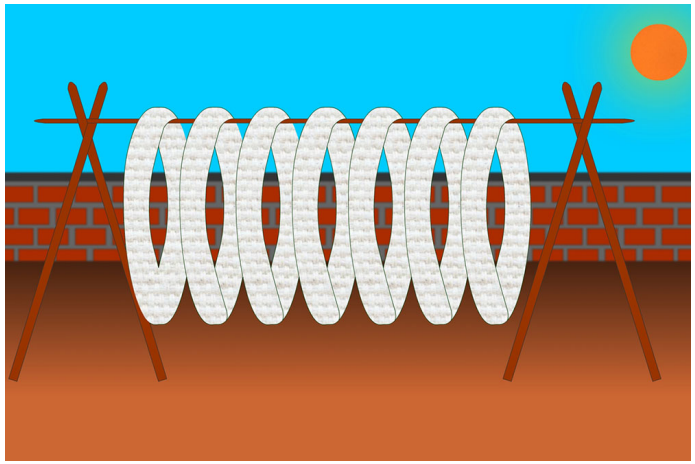
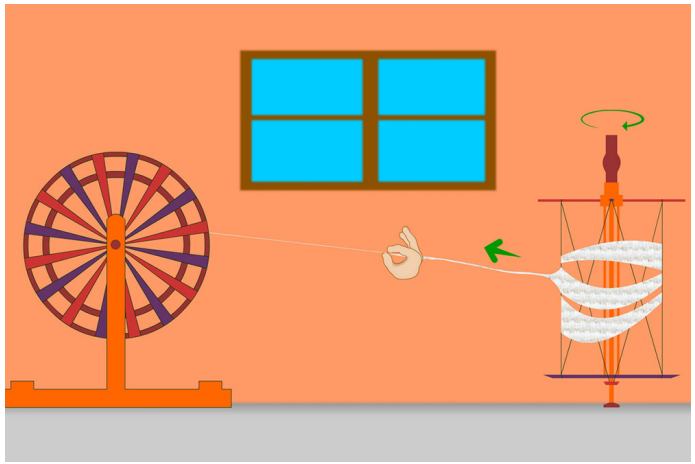
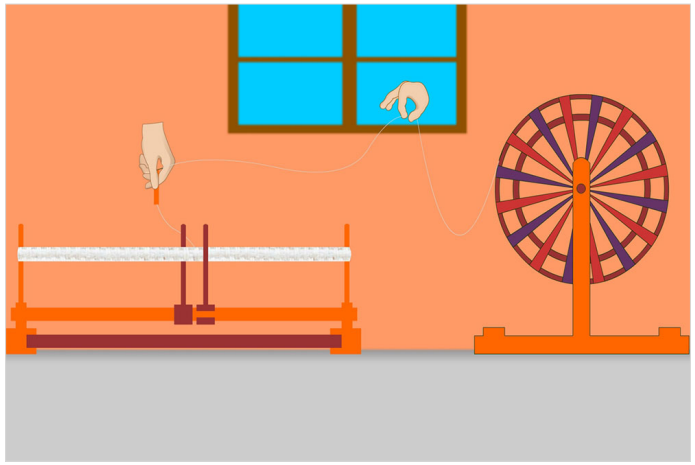
1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Initially, yarn is washed and dried under the sun.



Yarn is spun to winder from yarn swift.



Yarn is wrapped between two poles.

Required colour is attained by socking yarn in the dye.

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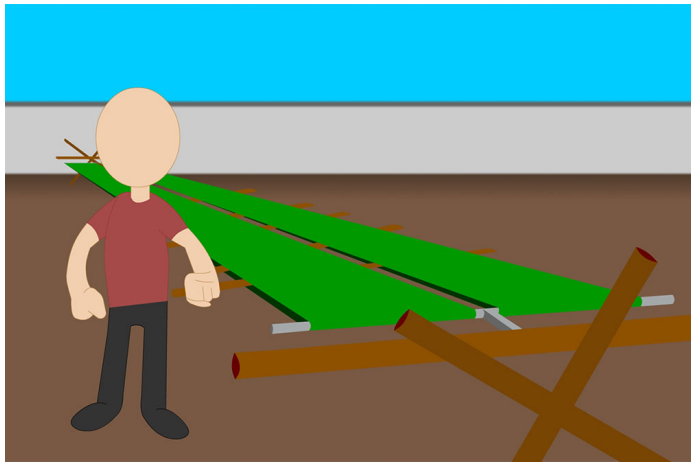
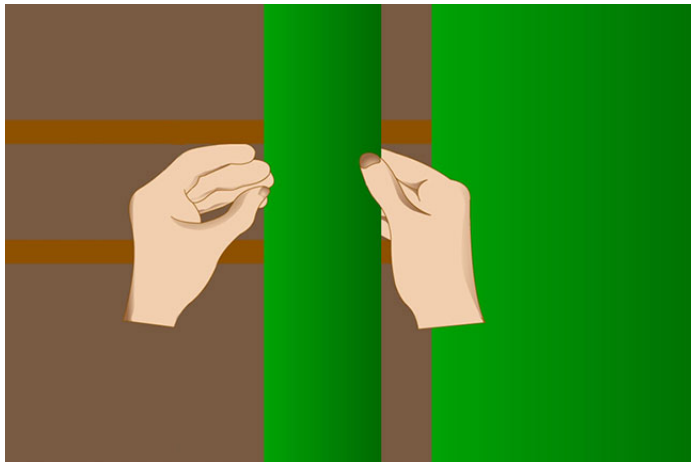
https://dsource.in/resource/ikat-saree-weaving-sambalpur-orissa/making-process

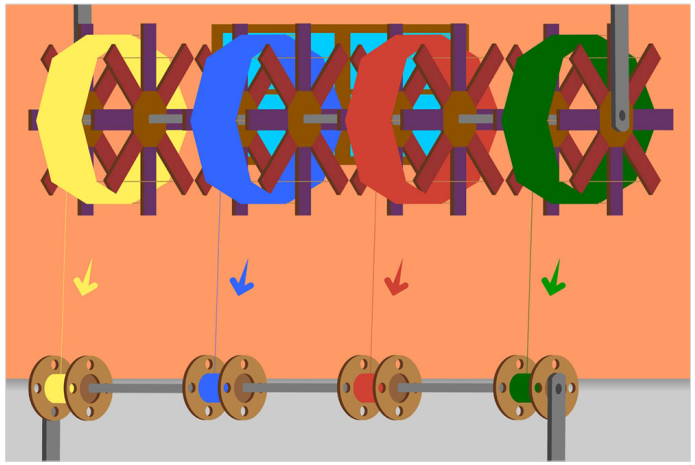
1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Yarn is sun-dried and sticks are placed between to wrap easily.



Yarns are untangled from the bundle.



Yarn is looped to the spool from the winding machine.

Yarn is drawn from different spools to the warping wheel.

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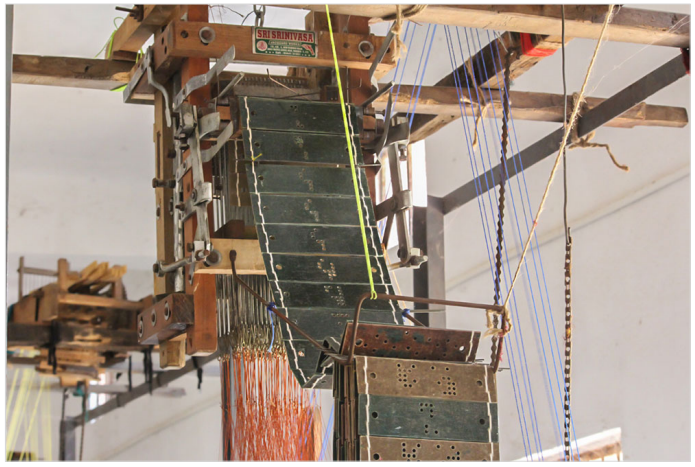
Source:
https://dsource.in/resource/ikat-saree-weaving-sambalpur-orissa/making-process

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

According to the design, holes are punched on the cards.

The cards are placed on the frame according to the design.

The cards are stitched together.



Cards are placed in the jacquard to obtain design on saree.

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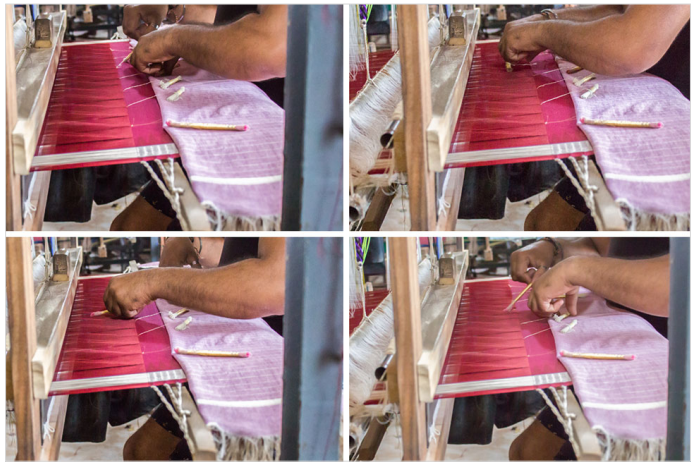
Source:
https://dsource.in/resource/ikat-saree-weaving-sambalpur-orissa/making-process

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Yarn is winded on pirn.

Pirn is placed inside flying shuttle for weft process.



Zari threads are passed through to make designs on saree.

Pedal helps the frame in the loom to move up and down.

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https://dsource.in/resource/ikat-saree-weaving-sambalpur-orissa/making-process

Various colours and patterns of sarees are made.

Beautifully made Ikat saree.

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Design Resource

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Source:
https://dsource.in/resource/ikat-saree-weaving-sambalpur-orissa/products

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Products

These Ikat silk sarees with intricate designs demand more than 10 days for making, whereas a simple plain saree requires more than 4 days for weaving a single saree. The designs made on the Ikat silk saree at Odisha are usually geometrical designs, dice, pinnacles, birds, animals, temple towers and rudraksha. A normal plain saree with no designs costs more than INR.4,000 whereas the designed saree costs INR.7,000.

Contrast colour saree with a unique border design.

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Source:
https://dsource.in/resource/ikat-saree-weaving-sambalpur-orissa/products

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Traditional design weaved on Ikat saree.

The price range of Ikat starts from INR.4000.

Beautifully made golden colour saree with unique design patron.

Check-patterned traditional Ikat saree.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Contact Details

This documentation was done by Professor Bibhudutta Baral and Rakshitha K. H. at NID, Bengaluru.

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